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BMJ's Coverage of Kennedy's Vaccine Reforms Amounts to Character Assassination

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Abstract

The reactions to Robert F. Kennedy Jr.'s initiatives to improve vaccine safety have been almost uniformly negative. I studied how the narratives were framed in a cohort of 33 articles in the BMJ of which 30 were written by journalists or the editor. I focused on whether the reporting was balanced and informative, and whether the articles saw any merit in Kennedy's reforms in his role as Secretary of Health and Human Services or supported the status quo.

The reporting in the BMJ was highly biased. Much of the information provided in Kennedy's disfavour was misleading, and some was wrong. All initiatives at improving vaccine safety were condemned, without any analysis of their merits in an evidence-based fashion. Instead, the BMJ cited people who had their own agendas and who condemned Kennedy without providing any evidence in their favour while expressing faith in vaccines, with the industry mantra that they are safe and effective, although all drugs will harm some people.

The BMJ did not take any interest in the widespread and lethal corruption in US healthcare institutions - one of Kennedy's focus points - but toned it down.

Despite the constant ad hominem attacks, Kennedy has succeeded to introduce important changes and plans related to vaccine safety, guidance about how vaccines are used, and about avoiding neurotoxic metals in vaccine adjuvants.

Key Words

BMJ, Kennedy, vaccines, biased reporting, character assassination

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I have no conflict of interest and my research was not funded.

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Introduction

Vaccines have saved millions of lives,[1] and many people believe we should not discuss their harms, as this could increase vaccine hesitancy. When Maryanne Demasi and I had done a highly relevant systematic review of serious harms of the Covid-19 vaccines, we were surprised that we were unable to publish it in a medical journal.[2]

Harvard professor Martin Kulldorff was fired for debating official policies and for objecting to vaccine mandates.[3] He coauthored the Great Barrington Declaration that warned against lockdowns during Covid but it didn't matter that he was right: His home country, Sweden, didn't lock down and had one of the lowest excess death rates in Europe.[4]

Martin broke the omerta. He prudently said that people with prior natural infection and children didn't need the Covid vaccine.[5] Children are at very low risk of becoming seriously ill after an infection whereas the mRNA Covid vaccines have killed about 1-2 per 200 children who got myocarditis.[2]

Martin was the first guest[6] on Broken Medical Science, the film and interview channel I created with documentary filmmaker Janus Bang to support free speech, unbiased reporting, and scientific honesty, which the pandemic had eroded.

When Robert F. Kennedy, Jr. was nominated as Secretary of Health and Human Services (HHS) in the United States, many people panicked because of his sometimes bizarre statements and stance on vaccines, above all his misguided belief that the MMR (measles, mumps and rubella) vaccine causes autism. I have known Kennedy since 2019 but have been unable to convince him that he should stop supporting Andrew Wakefield[7] whose fraudulent study The Lancet retracted.[8]

In my view,[9] America has a unique opportunity to break the taboos and to introduce better vaccine policies with Kennedy at the helm. I agree with him that we know far too little about vaccine harms and that we should not approve new vaccines without placebo-controlled studies.

As the reactions to Kennedy's initiatives have been almost uniformly negative, I studied how the narratives are framed.

Data and Methods

I chose the BMJ for my research because I considered it the best and most reliable medical journal in the world when I was on its editorial board, from 1995 to 2002.

On 5 October 2025, I searched for BMJ articles about Kennedy and vaccines published since 1 November 2024 when Donald Trump announced that if he became President, Kennedy would have "a big role in health care."[10] I searched on PubMed with Kennedy or RFK as title words and on Google with BMJ vaccine Kennedy (or RFK).

I focused on whether the reporting was balanced and informative, and whether the articles saw any merit in Kennedy's reforms or supported the status quo.

Results

I retrieved 33 full articles, of which 30 were written by BMJ journalists or its editor. The statements I reproduce below were BMJ's own or what they quoted others for.

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Calls to Prevent Kennedy from Becoming Health Secretary

Trump was widely criticised for nominating a vaccine denier who questioned the safety of vaccines; accused them of causing autism; criticised the drug industry; called for stopping water fluoridation; and promoted unpasteurised milk.[11]

It is rational to question vaccine safety and the drug industry, as our drugs are the leading cause of death and as psychiatric drugs, another focus for Kennedy,[12,13] are the third leading cause of death.[14] And in Europe, fluoride in the water supply is barely used.[15] When Kennedy said that "There's no vaccine that's safe and effective," he was also right. A vaccine cannot be both. All effective drugs harm some people.

Kennedy's book attacked Anthony Fauci, but it is relevant to point out what he did.[5] He lied repeatedly to Congress and the American people about his role in the highly dangerous gain-of-function experiments in Wuhan and in the cover up of the origin of the virus, but was pardoned by Joe Biden.[5,16,17] I believe the origin of Covid-19 is the biggest cover up in medical history.[18] There is no evidence in support of a natural origin whereas it is highly likely that the virus was made in China and escaped from a Wuhan lab.[5] During a hearing, the chair said that Fauci was so powerful that any disagreements people had with him were forbidden and censored on social and most legacy media.[19]

Kennedy was unqualified and dangerous; could inflict serious damage on Americans while undermining the reputation of the United States; claimed that the Covid vaccines were designed to protect Ashkenazi Jews and Chinese; called vaccination a "Holocaust;" suggested vaccines were used to microchip people secretly; implied that the pandemic was manufactured by the government to destroy democracy as part of a CIA backed coup d'etat; suggested that HIV doesn't cause AIDS; opposed disease prevention; undermined measles vaccination in Samoa, which caused 83 deaths; and recommended ivermectin and hydroxychloroquine to treat Covid.[11,20,21]

Quite a mouthful. That the measles outbreak in Samoa was Kennedy's fault was repeated by others in the BMJ,[21,22] but it occurred after two babies died because of incorrect preparation of the MMR vaccine,[23] which caused the government to suspend vaccinations.

Kennedy does not oppose disease prevention. He has repeatedly talked about preventing chronic diseases,[12,13] and many people thought ivermectin and hydroxychloroquine worked for Covid. These drugs are ineffective,[5] but Kennedy is not alone in being mistaken. The drug industry and their paid allies among doctors make fortunes on promoting useless treatments, and their activities are highly deadly.[24,25]

Over 18,000 doctors and 77 Nobel laureates urged the Senate to reject Kennedy as health secretary and it was called a baseless conspiracy to link school shootings to antidepressants.[21] It is not a conspiracy to interpret the science, which is clear: Antidepressants can cause violence and in some cases homicide.[25,26,27,28,29]

When Kennedy had been approved by the Senate Finance Committee, BMJ repeated that he was unqualified.[30] He would implement Trump's agenda, which included anti-abortion views, and would rely on science regarding vaccines, "but when presented with stacks of scientific studies showing that vaccines did not cause autism he deferred and suggested that more studies were needed."

When Kennedy said he would give the referral fees from a law firm suing Merck over its HPV vaccine Gardasil to his son, two Senators called it "plainly inadequate."[30,31]

Kennedy was an environmental lawyer with no medical or scientific credentials who had never run a large organisation; he was confused about the difference between Medicaid and Medicare; and he had helped found the Children's Defense Fund, an anti-vaccine organisation accused of disinformation and of preying on the desperation of parents and sick children while benefiting financially.[30]

There is some degree of harassment here. I cannot name a single Danish Minister of Health who had any medical or scientific qualifications.

Reactions when Kennedy Had Become Health Secretary

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Kennedy was sworn in on 13 February 2025. His vaccine denial, dangerous conspiracy theories, and erosion of trust in public health institutions were repeated, the Covid vaccine was "the deadliest vaccine ever made,"[32] and he had cancelled the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's (CDC's) annual flu vaccination campaign, which highlighted its ability to prevent severe complications.[31]

However, flu shots are pretty ineffective and trials have never documented that they prevent severe complications or deaths.[8] Moreover, the CDC's propaganda is highly misleading, touting colossal effects of vaccination without any hint that the claims come from unreliable case-control studies.[8] This is what we call "torture your data till they confess."[33]

Kennedy had stirred alarm by postponing the meeting in CDC's Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices (ACIP) "indefinitely."[31] This was not correct. The next meeting took place already in June.

Kennedy's actions appeared at odds with assurances given during his confirmation hearing that he would not undermine Americans' faith in vaccines. But faith is a religious concept. We do not evaluate vaccines based on faith but based on science.

Kennedy wished to focus on informed consent and vaccine advocates feared this could mean taxpayer funded campaigns that stress the risks of vaccines while ignoring their benefits. However, informed consent is a legal and ethical requirement.

Childhood vaccination schedules were among the possible factors causing chronic disease Kennedy would investigate, but vaccinologist Paul Offit said he supported vaccines and the vaccine schedule and that Kennedy "will do everything he can to make vaccines less available and less affordable because he's an anti-vaccine activist."

Offit made a confession of faith and did not consider the science. A US study showed that, after 10 years of follow up, vaccinated children had 2.5 times the rate of "any chronic disease," compared to unvaccinated children.[34] As had been feared for vaccines containing aluminium adjuvants, the risk was considerably higher for asthma, atopic conditions, autoimmune and neurodevelopmental disorders, and adjustment for confounding factors did not materially change the risk ratios.

The study was completed in 2020 and came to light in September 2025 because it was introduced into the congressional record during a Senate hearing on "The Corruption of Science."[35] The researchers had been warned that publishing their results could cost them their jobs.[34] For years, the Institute of Medicine had urged the CDC to conduct such a study using its Vaccine Safety Datalink, but the CDC never did.

The groundbreaking research by Peter Aaby and Christine Stabell Benn, which is on the list of vaccine milestones in Nature,[1] should also be considered. It showed that live attenuated vaccines decrease total mortality more than what can be predicted from their specific effect whereas non-live vaccines tend to increase mortality, predominantly among girls.[36] The sequence of vaccinations is also important; it is best to end with a live vaccine.

Vaccination programmes do not heed these observations, and there is a risk that the US childhood vaccination programme, which is huge - 68 vaccine doses targeting 18 different diseases - causes more harms than the Danish programme - only 17 vaccine doses for 10 diseases.[37]

Researchers who compared countries found a dose-response relationship: Nations that require more vaccines for their infants had higher infant mortality, neonatal mortality, and under age five mortality.[38] This alarm signal should lead to other studies, and Kulldorff announced at the new ACIP's first meeting in June, that a working group will examine the cumulative effect of childhood vaccine schedules.[39]

Offit claimed that infants can respond to about 10,000 vaccines at any one time,[37] whereas the European Medicines Agency (EMA) was worried that Covid vaccine boosters might overload people's immune system.[40] When it was confirmed that the mRNA Covid vaccines can weaken the immune response and

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make immune cells "lazy" when fighting off viral and bacterial infections,[41] Facebook called it "False information. Checked by independent fact-checkers."[42]

There was a measles outbreak in Texas and a child had died.[43] Kennedy changed tack after drawing criticism for calling the fast-spreading outbreak "not unusual," even though measles had been declared eradicated in the United States in 2000.[39]

Although Kennedy was deeply concerned and considered the outbreak a top priority, he offered a "lukewarm endorsement" of the MMR vaccine and did not urge the public to take it:[43] "The decision to vaccinate is a personal one" and parents should "consult with their healthcare providers to understand their options to get the MMR vaccine."

Kennedy had stated that "Studies have found that vitamin A can dramatically reduce measles mortality." However, the studies were conducted in developing countries and a Cochrane review of them did not find a significant effect on mortality.[44] A subgroup analysis of small children found a large effect, but the numbers were contradictory and there were few deaths.[44] The Cochrane review has been withdrawn with no explanation why: "Reason for withdrawal from publication: The Cochrane Acute Respiratory Infections Group would like to acknowledge funding for its editorial base from the Medical Benefits Fund of Australia."[44]

When another child had died from measles and there were 505 cases, mostly in a Mennonite community with low vaccination rates,[45] Kennedy "finally recommends vaccination." But he wrote on X that he had attended the funeral and visited "two extraordinary healers" who had "treated and healed some 300 measles-stricken Mennonite children using aerosolized budesonide and clarithromycin."

Neither drug has been approved for treatment of measles,[45] and it is highly unlikely that they could decrease measles mortality.

When Kennedy said that people should get the measles vaccine, but the government should not be mandating it, and that many vaccines had not been safety tested (which is correct, see section "Lack of Placebo Controls in Vaccine Trials" below), the BMJ quoted a source who called for Kennedy to resign because of his bias and complete disregard for science![46]

Autism Research

A vaccine sceptic, David Geier, who had often claimed that vaccines cause autism and was disciplined for practising medicine without a license, was appointed to head the CDC's large study to investigate a possible link between vaccines and autism.[47]

This was an exceptionally bad decision. The president of the nonprofit Autism Science Foundation that funds autism research said that it seemed that the goal was to prove that vaccines cause autism even though they don't.[48] She noted that the Institute of Medicine had found the many database studies from Sweden, Denmark, the UK, and the U.S. persuasive while Geier's studies were so flawed as to be uninterpretable.

Marty Makary and Peter Marks

The Food and Drug Administration's (FDA's) upcoming new commissioner, surgeon Marty Makary, was known for "criticising the medical establishment." But that's badly needed if we want a better healthcare where more people survive.[14,24,25]

Peter Marks, who the BMJ called the US top vaccine regulator, was forced by Kennedy to resign from the FDA.[46] He wrote in his resignation letter that truth and transparency are not desired by Kennedy who wishes subservient confirmation of his "misinformation and lies," and he claimed he had been pressured to produce non-existent data to support antivaccination claims.

Maryanne Demasi has provided a totally different story.[49] Marks' resignation was an opportunity for the FDA to refocus on protecting public health rather than rubber-stamping new vaccine approvals.

Marks supported fast-tracked vaccine trials, cut corners on safety testing, bypassed essential trial site and manufacturing inspections, and, despite mounting

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evidence of mRNA vaccine-related harms, was steadfast in dismissing these concerns as "misinformation." He authorised Covid mRNA vaccines for young people without having any trials with meaningful clinical outcomes but based on antibody titres, which he admitted were a poor surrogate marker. He also blurred the line between regulation and promotion, advocating for vaccines in FDA videos, far outside the agency's regulatory remit.

Maryanne expected Marks would soon take a well-paid position in a drug company, which he did. He got a top job at Eli Lilly and left behind "a crisis of trust in federal health oversight ... it raises the question of whether a public official used his position to influence markets and then personally benefited from the outcome."[50]

Lack of Placebo Controls in Vaccine Trials

Kennedy wanted all new vaccines to be tested against placebo whereas public health experts said it would be unethical when effectives vaccine already existed and had been tested.[51] This is not necessarily a contradiction. It depends on how we define "new." Kennedy said the new rule would not apply to flu vaccines, which are updated each year. Makary said that Novavax Inc. was trying to introduce a new Covid vaccine to the market using a 2021 study of a different product and that "New products require new clinical studies."

The major issue is that, since none of the childhood vaccines have been tested against a placebo,[52] but against another vaccine or a harmful vaccine adjuvant,[53] we don't know what their harms are.

About Trusting Authorities

Kennedy said the MMR vaccine contains aborted foetus debris[54] and the BMJ repeated his statements that vaccines cannot be both safe and effective and that parents should do their own research before vaccinating their children, which casted "doubt on safety and the FDA's role in approvals."[51]

The fact is that drug agencies are much too industry friendly and approve far too many ineffective and dangerous drugs, which is a major reason why our drugs are the leading cause of death.[14]

Peter Hotez warned that parents would mostly download "an onslaught of disinformation ... from the health and wellness, nutritional supplement influencer industry trying to peddle alternatives."

Hotez is correct,[8] but the alternative, to blindly trust authorities, increases people's risk of dying. I therefore wrote a book to help people find reliable information on the Internet,[55] and my book about vaccines[8] tell people how they can find out if a vaccine is worth taking, considering the risk of getting infected without the vaccine, the efficacy of the vaccine, and the risks of harm if infected and if vaccinated.

BMJ accused Kennedy, a misinformation spreader, to have played a role in falling vaccine coverage whereas a professor of nutrition was excited that finally, a government official wanted to prevent overweight and chronic disease.[56] About food additives, she said that it's better to be safe than sorry and that companies should prove that their products aren't harmful before they are allowed to sell them.

An interesting remark, considering the public outcry when Trump - with Kennedy at his side - announced that mercury and aluminium should get out of vaccines.[57]

Former CDC director Tom Frieden said Kennedy was right about the chronic disease epidemic but that the claims that the CDC is "the most political CDC in history" and has "manipulated data" were unsubstantiated. He warned that if trust is eroded, if science is disregarded, if expertise is sidelined, or if public health institutions are politicised or weakened, people might not believe facts that could save their lives.

The authorities, including the CDC, have lost our trust for the very reasons Frieden warn about,[4,5,8,18,24,25,33,58] particularly during the pandemic.[5,8,18]

BMJ critisised that Kennedy's report, "Making Our Children Healthy Again,"[12] discussed vaccines in the section on overmedicalisation, which suggested that the recommended vaccine schedule was excessive.[59] Frieden was concerned that the report cast doubt on the safety and efficacy of vaccines, which could undermine public confidence in lifesaving immunisations. However, as noted

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above, the US vaccine programme is so huge that it might be harmful.[37,38]

Kennedy's report raised doubts about the trustworthiness of the science and its independence from governments and the food and drug industries and it criticised the American Medical Association's policy to take disciplinary action against health disinformation, claiming that this silences critical discussion.[59]

The BMJ missed the point totally. Most published research cannot be trusted[60,61,62] and is often under heavy influence of financial, guild and political interests;[5,8,24,25,63,64] and the censorship during Covid under the banner of dis- or misinformation, which social media defined as disagreeing with official policies,[5] has been devastating for the progress of science and the survival of our citizens.[5,14,18]

Kennedy threatened to stop government scientists from publishing in major medical journals unless they changed dramatically and started to publish real science and stopped retracting real science.[65] Wakefield's study[66] linking the MMR vaccine to autism was mentioned but it was not clear if Kennedy meant The Lancet should not have retracted the fraud. Kennedy's plans appeared to contradict those of Bhattacharya who said he would let NIH scientists publish freely and had removed the existing requirement for prepublication review by supervisors.

The BMJ accused Kennedy of painting a dark picture of a society and Big Pharma when he said that all the major institutions had been captured by the industry. But this is correct.[24,25]

BMJ Ambushes Martin Kulldorff

Kennedy's dismissal of all 17 members of ACIP was called his most dangerous change to date, which would further fuel the spread of vaccine preventable illnesses.[67] He said that most of the members had received substantial funding from drug firms and that ACIP had become little more than a rubber stamp for any vaccine. Makary would also limit industry ties and industry participation and would boost patient and caregiver input.[68]

Discussions were underway to establish an independent US vaccine committee.[69] At long last, something positive about Kennedy's vaccine reforms in the BMJ: The new committee would be independent. An ousted member sent mixed messages. He said the abrupt changes had dramatically undermined trust in ACIP but also that the eight new ACIP members were critical thinkers.

Another BMJ journalist did not say anything positive about the new members.[70] Vicky Pebsworth had questioned the safety of vaccines; Michael Ross had not published any scientific papers; and Robert Malone, who was involved with the development of the mRNA technology, had denounced it and was a prominent figure in the antivaccine movement.

BMJ ambushed Martin Kulldorff, the new head of ACIP: A Swedish biostatistician who coauthored the Great Barrington Declaration, which advocated for lifting lockdowns to build herd immunity; fired as professor from Harvard when he refused to take the Covid vaccine; and earned thousands of dollars as an expert witness in litigation against Merck's Gardasil HPV vaccine, counter to ACIP rules, as members cannot do this while serving on the panel.

Martin was previously a member of two ACIP working groups, including the Covid vaccine safety working group, from which he was removed by CDC after being too pro-vaccine.[71] He had publicly disagreed with the CDC's pause of the Johnson and Johnson vaccine, which can cause blood clots, as the shortage in the vaccine supply could increase Covid-19 mortality. Older people should therefore still have access to the vaccine. CDC Director Rochelle Walensky used Kulldorff's exact reasoning to justify reinstating the vaccine four days later. A Harvard colleague stated that Martin is a world-class vaccine safety superstar with spectacular qualifications.[71] He developed the monitoring system the CDC uses for quick detection of vaccine harms, considered the best in the world.

Martin has told me that the purpose of lifting the lockdowns was not to build herd immunity, which would happen no matter what, but to avoid the enormous collateral public health damage.[4] He refused to take the Covid vaccine since he already had superior infection-acquired immunity, and it would have been unethical to take a vaccine he didn't need when there was a vaccine shortage.

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Harvard's firing of Martin was a shameful act.[3,72] And he has not broken any ACIP rules, as he has not been an expert witness in a lawsuit at any time while serving on the ACIP. Moreover, unlike most vaccine scientists, including those in the old ACIP and other CDC advisors, he has have never taken money from the drug industry.

Supporting the narrative that several of the new ACIP members were vaccine sceptics, BMJ repeated that Kennedy's firing of the old committee alarmed leading medical and public health groups[67,73,74] without a word about that some of these organisations receive heavy financial support from the drug industry.

BMJ Upped Their Attacks

When Martin announced a new working group to evaluate the cumulative effect of the children's vaccine schedule, and another to look at vaccines that had not been reviewed for over seven years, BMJ didn't provide a single positive comment, only ad hominem attacks:[70,75] Martin had been fired from Harvard, had opposed lockdowns, and had signed the "controversial" Great Barrington declaration.

Martin didn't sign the declaration; he wrote it with Bhattacharya and Sunetra Gupta from Oxford University in the UK. About a million people signed it, including me. It is not controversial but the best advice ever produced during the pandemic, saving many lives in Sweden that didn't lock down.[4]

Kennedy announced that the US would no longer provide funding to Gavi, which had ignored the science and lost public trust. He raised doubts about the Covid-19 vaccine and the diphtheria, tetanus, and pertussis vaccine (DTP) that the WHO and other agencies "consider safe and effective."

Bill Gates is a major donor to the WHO, partly via the GAVI Alliance.[8] He is very industry friendly and supportive of patents and was criticised by Doctors without Borders for his focus on introducing new expensive vaccines, rather than emphasising cheap vaccines and addressing basic health needs such as pollution, contaminated water, lack of sewerage, and poverty.

I have reviewed the studies by Aaby and Benn and agree with them that there is good evidence that the DTP vaccine in low-income countries increase overall mortality.[76] And I found serious issues with the research the WHO funded to defend the vaccine.[76]

There are also very good reasons to question the Covid vaccines.[5,8] Among those that have touted 100% efficacy are the FDA, Anthony Fauci, the Australian government, Science Magazine, Reuters, CNN, US National Public Radio, The Hill, Sky News, Pfizer, Moderna, AstraZeneca, and Johnson & Johnson.[5] But the miraculous effect quickly dropped to about 50% in practice and many of us have been infected even after two vaccinations.

A former liaison member of ACIP said that the ACIP meeting "was clearly orchestrated to sow distrust in vaccines."[72] And dozens of major medical associations said that "In this moment of uncertainty, physicians must align around clear, evidence-based guidance for patients."[75]

There were no supportive voices, no explanation from Martin that the new ACIP aspired to be more evidence-based and less conflicted than in the past, and no information that the old CDC was corrupt, e.g. by secretly accepting industry support,[77] also for its advisors.

A Professorial Opinion Piece

Two professors were also heavily biased.[22] They imagined all sorts of disasters because Kennedy had created a new ACIP of "highly conflicted" people "mostly involved in antivaccine activism," and had appointed Vinay Prasad as the FDA's top vaccine official, an "outspoken critic" of the drug industry and Covid vaccines who had called for more research about childhood vaccination and autism.

They created a huge strawman, claiming that to suggest placebo-controlled trials was to use a scientific veneer to disguise antivaccination talking points, resulting in unnecessary placebo trials - a big ethical problem when effective vaccination exists. I don't think anyone has suggested to use placebo if we have an effective

vaccine.
They criticised Kennedy for removing the recommendation that children and pregnant women should get a Covid vaccine. However, as Prasad and Makary explained, all other

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high-income nations confine vaccine recommendations to older adults or those at high risk for severe disease.[78]

There are clear risks to the foetus of using mRNA-based vaccines. They contain millions of DNA fragments, which can enter the cell nucleus and potentially change the host's DNA and cause cancer.[79] It is a gene therapy that has not been tested sufficiently, but ACIP intends to look into this.[80]

The professors argued that if vaccines will no longer be part of the no-fault compensation programme, vaccine manufacturers might not continue investing in the market. Currently, the drug industry has no incentive to study vaccine harms, as they cannot be held responsible for them. This system is difficult to defend.

They opined that antivaccination sentiment in the government could mean that CDC and FDA publications and websites may be used to disseminate poor science. As already noted, these agencies have disseminated hugely misleading information in the past. The FDA touted in 2021 that the Covid vaccine was "100% effective."[5] They seem to have removed this message, but the tracks remain: FDA's Peter Marks also mentioned 100% at a press briefing.[81]

Removing Mercury from Vaccines

A nurse who had worked with Kennedy and Children's Health Defense, his "antivaccine group," gave a presentation at the June ACIP meeting on the supposed risks of thiomersal (thimerosal, a mercury-based compound used as a preservative in multi-dose vaccines), which "was not vetted by experts in vaccine science beforehand, as is customary."[75] However, information that has been vetted by CDC's vaccine experts is often highly misleading.[5,8]

When the BMJ announced that Kennedy had banned thiomersal from influenza vaccines in a "safety" move to enhance public confidence in immunisation, they did not praise the move but repeated that vaccine sceptics had falsely linked thiomersal to autism for decades.[82] They ignored that mercury is not needed and might cause other harms. Therefore, according to the precautionary principle in drug regulation, mercury should disappear from vaccines.

BMJ took other old horses out of the stable claiming that the new ACIP was "made up of Kennedy's ideological allies." But they were inconsistent and noted that the American Academy of Paediatrics and the US Public Health Service recommended removal of thiomersal from vaccines after a 1999 FDA review; that it had been removed from almost all vaccines in the US and wasn't present in any of the annual flu vaccines used in Britain.

Plans about Producing Better Vaccines

When the HHS and the NIH announced a $500m programme to develop flu and coronavirus vaccines using an approach to protect against multiple virus strains, NIH director Jay Bhattacharya called it a paradigm shift, whereas "Experts expressed surprise at the level of investment in older technology."[51]

Kennedy cancelled the same amount of funding for development of mRNA vaccines and explained that the decision was made after a comprehensive review of mRNA related investments during Covid and that the data showed the vaccines failed to protect effectively against Covid and flu: "We're shifting that funding toward safer, broader vaccine platforms that remain effective even as viruses mutate."[83]

The BMJ didn't cite anyone who thought it was a good idea to develop better vaccines but wrote:[83] "Many experts were fiercely critical of the move"; "beyond shortsighted;" the most dangerous public health decision by the federal government in over 50 years; "it reinforces the impression that, in spite of his protestations, RFK Jr is antivaccine;" and "mRNA vaccines were an extremely important tool in saving the lives of people from Covid."

We don't know if the Covid vaccines have saved few or many lives.[84,85]

The US Preventive Services Task Force (USPSTF)

Kennedy planned to fire all 16 members of the USPSTF and replace them with his own nominees.[83] He considered them to be too "woke," too aware of diversity, equity and inclusion, and having other leftish beliefs.

The American Medical Association was critical, arguing that the task force had played an essential role in providing evidence-based preventive services, but its

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guidelines about screening for prostate and breast cancer are problematic. They recommend that men aged 55 to 69 years make an individual decision about screening after a conversation with their clinician about the potential benefits and harms,[86] and they recommend biennial screening mammography for women aged 40 to 74 years.[87] In Denmark, we do not screen for prostate cancer or women aged 40 to 49 for breast cancer.

The way the USPSTF handles gender issues is highly problematic. The draft guidelines for mammography screening said that they "apply to cisgender women and all other persons assigned female at birth (including transgender men and nonbinary persons) ... This is because the net benefit estimates are driven by sex (i.e., female) rather than gender identity, although the studies reviewed for this recommendation generally used the term 'women.'"[88]

This convoluted language means that the breast screening trials were done in women and not in men who feel they are women. What a surprise. Why use the term cisgender women? Virtually all of us identify with the sex we have in our chromosomes.

In 2022, the USPSTF talked about hormone therapy for postmenopausal "persons."[89] Only women can have menopause but that word wasn't used at all in the article.

We should not accept that a tiny, very vocal and aggressive group of transgender people[88] dictates that we can no longer talk about women and men as we have always done.

A Fatally Flawed Study about Aluminium Adjuvants in Vaccines

Annals of Internal Medicine refused Kennedy's request to retract a Danish register study of 1.2 million children,[90] which found that vaccines containing aluminium adjuvants did not increase the incidence of 50 chronic disorders, including autism and asthma.[91]

The journal's editor felt the study was "among the strongest research currently available" to address whether the dose of vaccine was related to chronic conditions.

Kennedy, "a vaccine critic," called the study "so deeply flawed it functions not as science but as a deceitful propaganda stunt by the pharmaceutical industry."[90]

"Kennedy, who has often called vaccines a cause of autism, accused the authors of not including the children who did not receive any vaccines as a control group. However, only 1.2% (15 237) of the children did not receive any aluminium adsorbed vaccine before age 2 - too small to be a control group."[90]

This is wrong. It is what the authors said when challenged, but when other researchers included the unvaccinated control group, it turned out that the study was fatally flawed.[53,91]

BMJ repeated that Kennedy had cancelled funding for mRNA vaccines and had been criticised for his response to the measles outbreak.[90] BMJ also criticised Kennedy for saying that three of the authors were affiliated with Denmark's Statens Serum Institut, a government owned vaccine company, because "The institute sold its vaccine division in 2017." This is a bit like saying that if Pfizer sold a particular group of drugs to another company, people working for Pfizer cannot be conflicted when they report on such drugs.

Kennedy accused Annals of failing to share raw data. The BMJ noted that "the authors say that Danish data privacy regulations prohibit sharing raw data," but this is not correct. Data can be pseudonymised and shared with other researchers on a secure platform.

Another BMJ journalist had the subheading, "Advancing an anti-vax agenda"[92] and repeated that Annals had refused to retract the aluminium study. But it is extremely difficult to get even fraudulent studies retracted. When psychiatrists and drug companies fraudulently concealed suicide attempts in children caused by antidepressants, we could not move the editors to act, and their excuses for inaction were other-worldly.[93]

Aluminium is neurotoxic and aluminium in vaccines is harmful.[53] As an expert witness for the Los Angeles law firm Wisner Baum, I read 112,000 pages of

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confidential Merck study reports and found that Merck's HPV vaccine Gardasil causes serious neurological harms.[58]

Conflicts of Interest at ACIP

The conflicts of interest were at record low when Kennedy dismissed the ACIP; they fell from 43% in 2000 to 5% in 2024.[92]

Kennedy mentioned that doctors often "forget" to declare their financial conflicts of interest,[94] which can cause immense harm. For example, the guidelines dealing with opioid prescribing for non-cancer pain were driving the highly deadly opioid crisis in the USA.[95]

BMJ's journalists didn't take any interest in conflicts of interest issues but downplayed them: "These findings appear to be in sharp contrast to Kennedy's concerns voiced in June, when he said the ACIP had been plagued with persistent conflicts of interest and become little more than a rubber stamp for any vaccine."[92]

Kennedy explained that the problem wasn't necessarily that ACIP members were corrupt but that their immersion in a system of industry-aligned incentives and paradigms enforced a narrow pro-industry orthodoxy. The new members would exercise independent judgment and "foster a culture of critical inquiry - unafraid to ask hard questions."[90]

BMJ didn't comment on Kennedy's statement but cited Adriane Fugh-Berman, professor in pharmacology and physiology: "Accusing ACIP of conflicts of interest is a transparently fake excuse for advancing Kennedy's anti-vaccine, anti-science agenda. This administration is gutting vital public health panels right and left, instead showcasing the views of anti-science quacks and zealots. We should expect an epidemic of preventable infectious diseases due to Kennedy's irresponsible, cynical actions."

Strong words from someone who - despite her professorship - believes in alternative medicine and propagates it.[96] I have explained why alternative medicine is no alternative but quackery.[97] If it worked, doctors would use it and wouldn't call it alternative.

The American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) issued their own childhood vaccination schedule, recommending children aged 6 to 23 months to receive a Covid vaccine even if they had already been infected with Covid or had been vaccinated before.[73] This was bad advice, but BMJ merely repeated that Kennedy had "unilaterally" announced that healthy women and healthy children no longer needed the vaccine and that he had fired all 17 members of ACIP and replaced them partly with vaccine sceptics.

BMJ made no attempts at finding out which policy was the most reasonable one. AAP spokespeople were quoted for their views whereas Kennedy was quoted for a post on X saying that the AAP and its journal, Pediatrics, should disclose conflicts of interest so that Americans may ask whether the recommendations "reflect public health interest or are, perhaps, just a pay-to-play scheme to promote commercial ambitions of AAP's Big Pharma benefactors."

Four days later, BMJ's headline was: "Over 5000 US government health employees denounce 'dangerous and deceitful' RFK Jr statements."[98] In an open letter,[99] they expressed "grave concern for America's health and security" after the firing of hundreds of CDC employees and a violent attack on CDC headquarters where a police officer was killed. BMJ wrote that "The gunman was reported to believe that Covid-19 vaccines had caused his mental health problems."[98]

The letter claimed that the new ACIP members lacked appropriate expertise and followed ideology rather than science, and an NIH spokesperson put the blame for an insane gunman's actions on the anti-vaccine and anti-science rhetoric by Kennedy and Bhattacharya.[98] I interviewed Bhattacharya at the NIH for our film and interview channel in June for a whole hour.[100] This excellent scientist was defamed by an NIH spokesperson and the BMJ propagated it.

The Firing of CDC's Director

When CDC director Susan Monarez was forced out "after reportedly refusing to support Kennedy's vaccine policy and to fire CDC staff members," nine former CDC directors and Senator Bernie Sanders called for Kennedy to resign.[101]

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An HHS spokesperson directed the BMJ to an article Kennedy had published two days earlier where he explained that bureaucratic inertia, politicised science and mission creep had corroded the CDC's purpose as a guardian of health and squandered public trust. That dysfunction produced irrational policy during Covid: cloth masks on toddlers, arbitrary 6-foot distancing, boosters for healthy children, prolonged school closings, economy-crushing lockdowns, and suppression of low-cost therapeutics in favour of experimental and ineffective drugs.

Trump said the CDC had been ripped apart by arguments over the benefits of Covid drugs and he called on drug companies to release data showing the safety and benefit of the vaccines and drugs: "Many people think they are a miracle that saved millions of lives. Others disagree!"

Trump said that the antiviral drug remdesivir was not a miracle drug.[102] But is was hyped in the extreme by two Danish professors who participated in a clinical trial, and one of them "forgot" to mention he had received money from Gilead, the manufacturer, and other drug companies.[102] When the FDA approved remdesivir, it ignored the negative results from a big WHO funded trial and a big trial from China.[8] The cost of this ineffective drug was about $2400.

In contrast to Kennedy's views,[103] the cheap drugs, hydroxychloroquine and ivermectin, do not work either against Covid.[8]

A BMJ headline was: "RFK Jr is grilled over vaccines and CDC chaos at fiery US Senate hearing."[104] Kennedy explained that the first vaccines had been perfectly matched to the virus when they were badly needed; that later studies showing the vaccines saved lives were only "modelling studies;" and that the number of deaths from Covid-19 was unknown, blaming this on poor CDC data.

Monarez said that the ACIP was "filled with people who have publicly expressed antivaccine rhetoric" and that her dismissal was "a deliberate effort to weaken America's public health system and vaccine protections."

Maryanne Demasi published the article, "Savages in the Senate: Kennedy ambushed in a game of dirty politics."[105] Kennedy used scientific arguments and was the clear winner of the ferocious debate. Senators branded him a "charlatan" and shouted him down, but the hearing revealed the desperation of his critics who displayed sheer dishonesty.

Health insurers would take an "evidence based" approach and continue to follow the previous, higher coverage, recommendations.[106] This comment insinuated that Kennedy was not evidence-based even though it was most reasonable to drop the recommendation to vaccinate everyone down to age six months.

In a highly convoluted and difficult-to-understand opinion piece, a fellow in healthcare policy and practice tried to argue that Kennedy was wrong.[107] She interpreted his warning that "trusting the experts is not a feature of science or democracy, it's a feature of totalitarianism and of religion" negatively, arguing that the harmful rhetoric was a form of science denialism that undermines valid scrutiny.

BMJ's editor-in-chief, Kamran Abbasi, provided a staggering display of hypocrisy:[108]

"Are the MAGA methodologists out of control? The chief methodologists of the Make America Great Again cult are Donald Trump and Robert F Kennedy Jr - and, as with everything that Trump reigns over, the willing and unwilling complicity of professionals, institutions, and the MAGA media is a given. This is problematic enough when evidence tells us that depriving people of their liberties and eroding democracy will harm health and wellbeing ... Yet the MAGA methodologists are unchecked: their hubris extends to believing that they know best about science and medicine."

Abbasi seems to have forgotten what happened during the Biden administration,[8] and he continued unabated:

"The credo of MAGA methodologists is to create a health crisis based on data that are unavailable and may not exist; misleading appraisals of the science; single studies that are preliminary, misinterpreted, or half remembered; and general amplification of misinformation. They are overlords of social media."

Kamran opined that Monarez lost her job because she defied the MAGA

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methodologists and "had refused to commit to approving vaccine recommendations without evidence ... The cult of MAGA methodology is out of control, and it's causing harm."

Monarez banned experts from examining vaccine harms.[109] In a Senate hearing, her defenders painted her as a martyr, but awkward smiles, evasions, and shaky science told another story, and she performed miserably.[110] When Senator Bernie Sanders asked her if she had "faith in vaccines," she replied that she "believes in vaccines" and that they are "safe and effective."

This moment revealed how vaccines are beyond rational debate. The language of "faith" and "belief" belongs to a sermon, with vaccines treated as holy objects that can only be praised, never questioned.

Discussion

The BMJ's reporting about Kennedy's initiatives to improve vaccine safety was so biased and condemning that it amounted to attempts at character assassination. To constantly mention his less fortunate statements and depict him as a leading anti-vaxxer even when he suggested much-needed reforms is what tabloids and industry supported magazines do.

Much of the information provided in Kennedy's disfavour was misleading and some was wrong. There were virtually no attempts at providing an evidence-based discussion about the merits of his proposals. Instead, the BMJ cited people who had their own agendas and who condemned him without providing any evidence in their favour while expressing faith in vaccines, with the industry mantra that they are safe and effective even though all drugs will harm some people. Retsef Levi will lead the CDC working group that will study the harms of the Covid vaccines. Astonishingly, lawyers in the Department of Health tried to block him.[111]

The BMJ did not take any interest in the widespread and lethal corruption[24,25,112] in US healthcare institutions - one of Kennedy's focus points - but toned it down.

BMJ cited conflicted experts for saying that there is no documentation that mercury and aluminium in vaccines are harmful, which is putting the cart before the horse, and, for aluminium, it is wrong.[53] It should have been demonstrated in randomised trials that adding toxic metals to vaccines is safe, before they were approved by drug regulators.

I am convinced that no Minister of Health worldwide has ever been defamed in a leading medical journal to the degree Kennedy has. This is not the BMJ we once knew. Many of the 55 articles I have published in the BMJ questioned orthodoxy or threatened powerful economic or guild interests,[112] also the one about organised crime in the drug industry,[113] which was very difficult to publish.[112] PLoS Medicine questioned if the fraud was deliberate, and the BMJ didn't allow me to call it organised crime, only corporate crime, even though the business model of Big Pharma is organised crime.[24]

Today, it is very difficult to publish anything in the BMJ that speaks truth to power.[112] When my coworker and I submitted a paper about the EMA's mishandling of their investigation into the suspected serious neurological harms of the HPV vaccines in 2016, it started an absurd Odyssey lasting three years.[114] The BMJ killed our paper but didn't have the guts to tell me. When we submitted it to BMJ Evidence-based Medicine, it was quickly accepted and published.[114] After my "bad trip" with the BMJ, an editor told me that "the BMJ is dead."

John Ioannidis et al. have shown that the BMJ had a strong bias in favour of authors advocating aggressive lockdown measures during the pandemic.[115] There was little open and balanced debate of different policy options, and advocates of restricted, focused measures were "almost extinct from BMJ pages." It is fair to say that the journal is no longer a forum for open scientific debate. The Lancet was also strongly biased.[5,8,115] In numerous articles, the editor-in-chief, Richard

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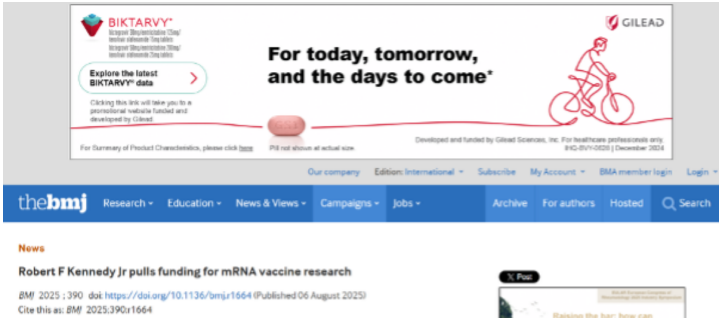
Horton, advertised aggressive mitigation advocacy.[116]

Vinay Prasad, FDA's top vaccine regulator, who was ousted in an act of dirty politics and quickly reappointed,[117] noted that while some of Kennedy's positions are extreme, others are genuinely worthy of debate, and still others are correct.[118] He said that many of Kennedy's ideas are actually used in Europe and that "If other nations are doing it, we should be willing to look into it."

Before Kennedy became health secretary, Prasad argued that the best way to curb vaccine hesitancy was to approve him and redirect his energies to generating more data, which could answer key questions such as which childhood immunisation programme is optimal.[119] This should be studied in randomised trials.

The absolute low point in the BMJ was when Gavin Yamey and David Gorski attempted character assassination of the authors of the Great Barrington Declaration in an opinion piece in 2021.[120] Martin Kulldorff described elsewhere what was wrong with their article.[121] It was full of serious errors; the attempt to link the authors to the Koch brothers was an ad hominem attack of the highest order; the Declaration, which challenged an orthodoxy, was accused of peddling a "well-funded sophisticated science denialist campaign based on ideological and corporate interests" but no one paid the authors for their work or for advocating focused protection; and Yamey and Gorski urged people to use "political and legal strategies" rather than scientific argument to counter the Declaration.

I wonder what the motives are for the BMJ to commit systematic character assassination. When things are difficult to explain, I often "follow the money." When I looked up an article about Kennedy on BMJ's website, an advertisement for Gilead popped up at the top of the screen:



Gilead has violated federal anti-kickback laws, defrauded government programs, and caused millions in false claims to be submitted to state and federal health systems in the United States.[122] Gilead entered an agreement to supply the European Union with remdesivir for $1.2 billion.[123] They received data from the WHO's big Solidarity trial[124] that showed the drug didn't work two weeks earlier but didn't reveal them to the European Commission, which only learned they had been fooled the day after they had signed the agreement.

I cannot see much difference between the BMJ and mainstream media. When Trump nominated Kennedy as upcoming health secretary and Marty Makary as the new FDA commissioner, the legacy media went berserk.[125] Instead of describing what is wrong with healthcare and the widespread corruption at the FDA,[24,25] the media attempted character assassination on both Kennedy and Makary.

Vaccines have become sacrosanct. As Kulldorff wrote,[121] the error-strewn attacks in the BMJ demonstrated what awaits academics who challenge prevailing views, which means that 400 years of scientific enlightenment may be coming to an end. Nothing hurts like the truth about healthcare,[126] but we must tell the truth.

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